

Happy Friday, New South Family. Welcome to the 85th edition of the Weekly Word – this for the week ending March 19, 2021.

-----**Announcements and Resources**-----

Announcements

- 1) **The Latest Issue of Light and Life Weekly Magazine** [is available by clicking here.](#)
- 2) **The Weekly Newsletter of the Free Methodist Foundation** [is available by clicking here.](#)
- 3) **Free Methodist Pastors and Leaders Newsletter** – [click here to download the latest copy.](#)
- 4) **Free Methodist History and Polity** – We have had to re-schedule this class for the following dates. This class meets the requirement for ordination in the FMCusa, and costs \$150.00. If you're interested, [please e-mail the professor, Dr. Craig Saunders.](#)

The class will be held in Wilmore, but will also offer a Zoom / video component.

Dates / Times:

April 9-10 - Friday - 6:00-9:00 p.m.//Sat - 8-4

April 23-24 - Friday 6:00-9:00 p.m.//Sat - 8-4

May 1 - Saturday 8-3

- 5) **Annual Conference News** AC for us is scheduled for May 21 – 22, noon to noon, and unless something really wonky happens with our national health situation, annual conference will be an in-person event at Wilmore. Please note the May date on your calendar.
- 6) **Spring Conference Women's Retreat:** April 9-11, Murphy, North Carolina
Vickie Reynen, wife of Africa Area Director, Mike Reynen, speaker. Activities include worship, prayer, breakout sessions, silent auction, many sight-seeing and shopping options in the beautiful Carolina mountains and more!

Registration/Lodging Details: Free event, but you will be responsible for your own lodging on Friday and Saturday nights in an area hotel or B&B. The Murphy FMC will provide lunch and dinner on Saturday. Husbands are also welcome to all meals and worship times, should a couple wish to experience spring in the mountains together.

With questions or to confirm attendance, contact Lois Huff at 828.361.5568 or loismhuff@kih.net.
- 7) **Leadership In Tumultuous Times Video Series** The conference superintendents from Bishop Cowart's area have been creating these video discussion / training sessions from a few months now. We have completed three so far. Simply click on the title below. (The first one is a little over an hour, but the next two are shorter!)

#1 – Title: [Self-Differentiated Leadership](#)
#2 – Title: [Responding to Reactivity](#)
#3 – Title: [Managing the Herd Mentality](#)
- 8) **Wabash Institute** Below you will find registration information for the Wabash Institute Spring Semester 2021. Class size is limited, so register as soon as possible. Cost: \$100.00 per class. Questions? Contact Judy Kinnick, Office Manager/MEG Coordinator - Wabash Conference of the Free Methodist Church. Cell: 317-442-1631

Homiletics: Professor: Rev. Dr. John Lane

This class will meet via Zoom on Monday evenings for 7 weeks beginning Monday, April 19, 2021. The first class, on Monday, April 19, will meet from 5-7 p.m. (ET) All other classes will meet from 7-9 p.m. (ET)

[Click here to register for Homiletics](#)

Genesis, An Old Testament Bible Course: Professor: Rev. Russ Veldman

This class will meet via Zoom on Saturdays for 7 weeks beginning Saturday, April 17, 2021.

Time: 10:00 am - 12 noon (ET)

[Click here to register for Genesis, an Old Testament Bible Course](#)

9) What Now? What Next? Here is (what I think is) a helpful article by Chip Ingram (Decision Magazine.)

If we are entering a new epoch in history, how do Christians need to live?

We're living in a world right now that's different from any other time in our lives. COVID-19 is the greatest global disturbance that we have ever seen.

It has brought with it big questions: What now, and what's next? Where do we go from here? What things will never return? And even more important, what is God up to, and what is our part in this drastically changing world?

I've come to three conclusions. First, we will never return to "normal." Second, we can rebuild. Third, now is not the time to mourn the past, but to innovate, to dream, to lead, to be bold and to recognize that God is "shaking the world so that the things that can be shaken will be shaken and the things that cannot be shaken will remain" (Cf. Hebrews 12:27).

Those who study history tell us that about every hundred years we enter a new era, a major shift in how life works. And about every 400 to 500 years, we enter a new epoch where drastic shifts alter the course of history forever. Think of major shifts like the fall of the Roman Empire, the rise of Christianity or the Reformation. This global pandemic, in concert with the shifts of power globally; massive economic challenges; the surging impact of technology; the decline of the nuclear family; distrust of major institutions; and the growing polarization around race and politics, has created the perfect storm for drastic change.

I think it's safe to say we have begun a new era and possibly launched the beginning of a new epoch. I believe that now is the time to be Christians who live like Christians so the church can do what God has promised and purposed it to do. What does that look like? Allow me to summarize what I believe we must do by using an acronym to help us remember Who and what is most important—C.H.R.I.S.T.

Christ, Not Causes

There are many important causes, but we must focus on the priority and the centrality of Christ. It's not that causes are unimportant, but they are secondary. As believers, we need, first and foremost, to focus on the Person of Christ.

I would suggest that many causes will be best served when followers of Jesus return to their first love. Some causes have begun to take a higher priority in the church and in individuals' lives than Jesus. And these secondary issues are causing division in the Body of Christ. However, when we focus our devotion on Him and His Word, we will treat one another as brothers and sisters (see John 13:34-35). We'll address various causes, but we will be unified first in our commitment to Him and one another.

Healing, Not Hostility

Jesus came at a time when there was great hostility. There were class struggles between the poor and the very rich. There was political division and oppression. There was great disease. Jesus' response: He healed the sick, fed the poor, instructed the rich to be generous and taught us to be peacemakers. We, as followers of Christ, need to focus on healing, not hostility. We need to be asking: How do we help people? How, in humility, do we speak the truth in love as we meet the needs of others?

"As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ... 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.' ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:18, 20-21, NIV). And that has to begin in our homes, our small groups, our neighborhood, our workplace, our churches, our communities.

Relationships, Not Real Estate

If there's anything we've learned from this pandemic, it's that people are desperate for community and relationships. And we in the church have to admit that we've too often measured our growth by our buildings, our real estate and the number of people coming to our services. We've taken the practices of business and mass marketing and tried to mass-produce disciples.

Now is the time to ask ourselves, "How is that really working? What does the average Christian's life look like?" We have many decisions, but few disciples. We now have the opportunity to create new ways to connect hurting people who have experienced some of the greatest challenges and pain of their lives.

Relationships are at the heart of Christianity. "If you abide in me," Jesus said, "and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7, ESV). "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13, ESV). You don't lay down your life for brothers and sisters by attending religious activities. There's a role for services and programs, but we have to get back to the heart of discipleship, and the heart is deep, authentic relationships.

Innovation, Not Indignation

As things change rapidly, the temptation for some of us is to be indignant. "It used to be like this; now you're changing my church, my world." And there's an anger and resentment that can breed as people lose predictability and control.

It's hard to change traditions. But the drastic upheaval we're seeing creates an opportunity to innovate like never before.

Many no longer drive to work. The rhythms of life have changed. How we communicate has changed. How we give. How we love one another. We need to shift from the organizational, collective focus of our churches, which developed passive believers, to: "What is the individual calling that God has on each of our lives?" Now is the time to equip every believer to be a difference-maker in their sphere of influence.

Substance, Not Success

My generation needs to own this: Our kids, teens and young adults don't know the Bible, and research indicates most of their parents aren't regularly in the Bible either. They don't know theology or why it matters. We need to return to truth. And I don't mean teaching it in a perfunctory way that people can simply quote things. I'm talking about the radical study and engagement in God's Word that creates parents living out their faith in such a way that kids learn by "catching" it from their passion, character and example.

Trust, Not Technology

Technology and science are the new gods of our world. They promise to deliver us from all our problems. We need to leverage technology, but put our trust in God and His Word. Trust His promises. Trust one another. Trust in the institution of marriage. Trust in the institution of the church.

Technology is a wonderful thing, but its excess and overuse is negatively transforming God's people to embrace the values of the world. Technology champions progress; yet now it curates your life and reinforces your prejudices. The Utopia it promises is a myth. Its value is great only when used with wisdom and restraint.

New epoch or not, the core issue in all humanity, for all time, is the issue of the human heart. It doesn't matter whether your IQ is high or low, whether you're rich or poor, black, brown, white or Asian. The heart must be healed, the truth must be taught and love must be lived out, and the only One who can heal, restore and empower is the Lord Jesus Christ.

10) First Trust Covid Tracker My financial advisor sends these every once in a while and I find them helpful – see below / attached.

11) You Will Also Find attached / below a greeting from the Angelos, FM missionaries to Portugal.

Conference Calendar

March 19-21 NSC Spring Youth Retreat
March 23 NSC BOA Zoom Meeting
April 9-10 History and Polity Zoom Class Begins
May 21-22 NSC Annual Conference – Wilmore
June 17-20 NSC Family Camp
June 21-27 NSC Teen Camp
June 28-July 2 NSC Kids Camp

March / April Birthdays

Start, Ray – March 19

Wittenberg, Christopher – March 21

Ryan, Roger – March 27

Anderson, Neil – April 19

Ritter, Joe – April 22

*I'd love to know your birthday, so the conference can send you an expensive present...or maybe just a "Happy Birthday" wish. If yours is not listed, [please e-mail it to me.](#)

This Week's Passage, Quote and Joke

Passage: This Sunday, the fifth Sunday in Lent, I continue the series, "Jesus' Passion Places" by looking at Jesus' encounter with Pilate as told us by John.

Quote: "The reason lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place is because the same place isn't there the second time." ~Willie Tyler

Joke:

A woman by the name of Gladys Dunne was visiting my church for the first time. After the service, as the congregation was exchanging greetings, she extended her hand to another congregant and said, "Hi, I'm Gladys Dunn." The man replied, "I'm glad he's done, too!"



Blessings on your worship this weekend!

D-

DEAR PASTORS AND FRIENDS FROM
NEW SOUTH CONFERENCE.

Greetings from **Portugal**,
the westernmost point of the
European Continent!

***We remember you
every day in our
prayers, crying
out to the Lord of
the Harvest to
bless you and
your families.***

We would like to thank you for
your **friendship, prayers,
generosity and support.**

We feel your love and
consider you all part of what
God has done in Portugal and
beyond.



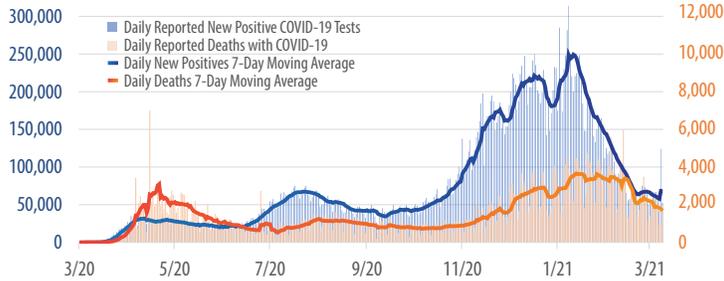
Eduardo & Cindi Angelo

FMWM Portugal

First Trust COVID-19 TRACKER

Daily Reported New Positive COVID-19 Tests vs. Daily Reported Deaths with COVID-19 in the U.S.

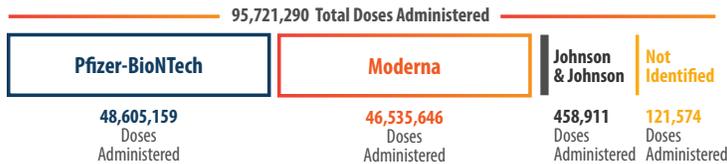
March 1, 2020 - March 9, 2021



Source: CDC.gov

U.S. COVID-19 Vaccine Doses Administered by Vaccine Type

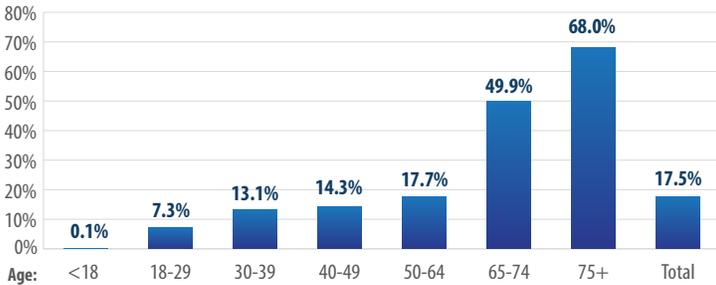
As of March 10, 2021



Source: CDC.gov

Share of People Who Have Received at Least One Dose of the COVID-19 Vaccine by Age

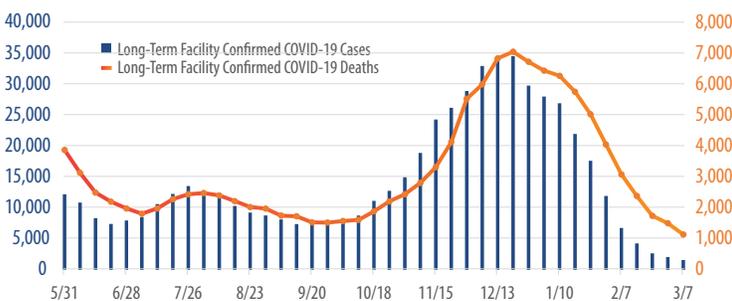
As of March 9, 2021



Sources: CDC.gov, Census.gov (population estimates as of 4/1/20), First Trust Advisors

Confirmed COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by Week in U.S. Long-Term Care Facilities

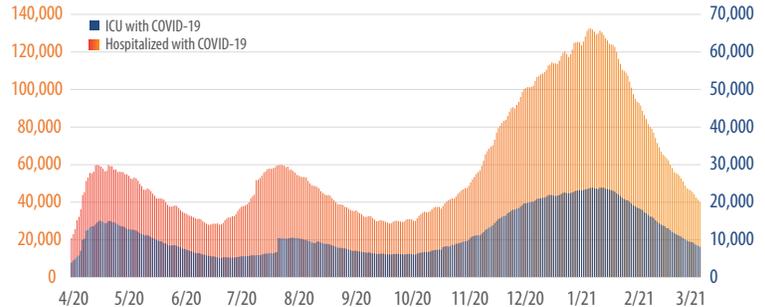
May 31, 2020 - March 7, 2021



Source: CDC.gov

Current Patients Hospitalized and in the ICU with COVID-19

April 1, 2020 - March 7, 2021

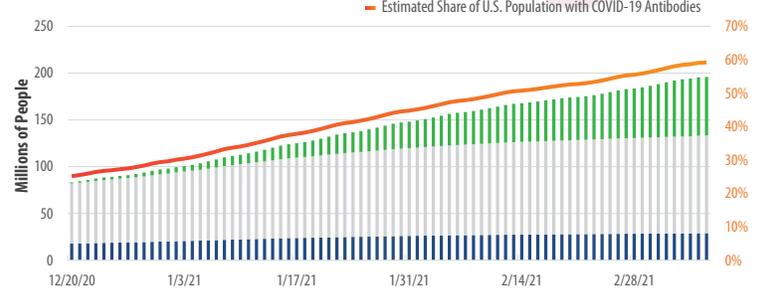


Source: Covidtracking.com

Since their respective peaks, **COVID-19 cases have plummeted 73%**, **COVID-19 deaths have declined by 54%**, while **COVID-19 hospitalizations are down 71%**. **Currently, COVID-19 patients occupy 12.2% of total ICU beds**, while **only 5.87% of total inpatient beds are being used**.¹

Path to Immunity

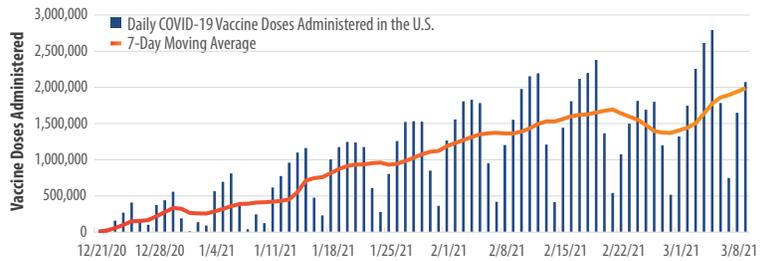
December 20, 2020 - March 9, 2021



Sources: CDC.gov, U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (population estimates as of Nov 2020), First Trust Advisors L.P.

Daily COVID-19 Vaccine Doses Administered in the U.S.

December 21, 2020 - March 9, 2021, 7-Day Moving Average



Source: CDC.gov

With the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan signed into law, total Federal expenditures on the COVID-19 pandemic will come to roughly \$5 trillion, surpassing the total inflation adjusted cost of World War 2 at \$4.1 trillion.²

¹CDC.gov (August 1, 2020 - March 8, 2021); ²covidmoneytracker.com (March 8, 2021), fas.org (June 29, 2010)